

## BACKGROUNDER

### CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is unique in that it is the first multilaterally negotiated arms control agreement with a complete and absolute ban on an entire category of weapons.

The CWC bans the development, production, stockpiling and use of all chemical weapons. It requires the destruction, over a 10-year period, of facilities capable of producing chemical agents.

It provides for the establishment of an Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in The Hague, to implement the Convention.

The Convention also contains the most comprehensive and rigorous verification measures ever developed in a multilateral agreement. States signing the Convention agree to allow the OPCW to:

- closely observe and confirm the destruction of any chemical weapons stockpile and production facility they possess;
- closely monitor any continuing permitted production of toxic chemical agents;
- monitor the global chemical industry with routine international inspections of civilian production and other facilities, in a graduated regime according to the degree of potential risk of cheating; and,
- as the ultimate recourse, to resort to short-notice challenge inspections, without right of refusal, if one state has reason to believe that another signatory state is engaged in activities incompatible with the obligations and goals of the Convention.

Should a signatory state be found to be in violation of its obligations, the Convention has a sanctions regime. It also allows the OPCW to refer serious violations to the United Nations Security Council for possible mandatory action under the UN Charter.

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